

EP 22

298

08368 aa 41

REMARKS

UPON A

PAMPHLET

CONCERNING

The NECESSITY of Erecting an
ACADEMY at GLASGOW.

In a LETTER to the AUTHORS.

He that is first in his own cause seemeth just, but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him.

SOLOMON.

B—
2

GLASGOW:

Printed for JAMES DUNCAN, junior, bookseller in the
Trongate, opposite to the Main-Guard.

MDCCLXII.

[PRICE SIX-PENCE.]

REMARKS, &c.

GENY LEMER

Y OUR principal concern being
that, as you will have seen, I have
some notice in the city. I have seen
it; I have seen certain of the
others who were in the city, and
it by the way. I have seen
not be much distinguished by the
are begun to be distinguished by the
with abundance of highlanders and
epithets: epithets, however, well chosen and
mannerly they might appear; with whatever
attention they were listened to by the grave, I am
not, and admitting audience, are not decisive
in them. It is to be feared of them, I think
you may well think them; if you have not
would not advise you to do so, or to trouble to
give about them. I am, Sir, your obedient
servant.



R E M A R K S, etc.

GENTLEMEN,

YOUR pamphlet concerning Education hath, as you must have heard, made some noise in the city. Many have approved of it; some have censured parts of it; and there are others who have railed at you, and condemned it by the lump. However, I think you need not be much discouraged, that public orations are begun to be delivered against you, set off with abundance of high-sounding and frightful epithets: epithets! however well chosen and mannerly they might appear; with whatever attention they were listened to by the grave, learned, and admiring audience, are not decisive arguments. If you have heard of them, I think you may well slight them; if you have not, I would not advise you to be at any trouble to enquire about them: eruptions of zeal and rage

may be very harmless; and at any rate it is best to let them alone, and suffer them to subside of themselves.

I got the pamphlet so soon as it reached Glasgow: I have perused it, I believe, with more than ordinary attention; and I am tempted to do a thing which is not a little out of my way. As an impartial by-stander, I am going to make a few remarks upon your letter; but with a freedom similar to that which you have assumed. You cannot be offended reasonably, if yourselves are treated in the like manner as you have ventured to treat others. I set down things as they occur to me, without following your order, or even attempting to observe any sort of method.

But, first, I will frankly acknowledge, that there is nothing extravagant in the plan which you propose; it might very easily be executed, and would be of unspeakable advantage. This is not the first time I have thought of the matter. I firmly believe, that if some such course of education had been delivered for these fifty or sixty years past, our country, at this day, would have been in a state of improvement, which it cannot arrive at for many years to come.

But the proposed Academy would be far more complete, if some of the genteel exercises, such as horsemanship, were taught at it. This, as I have heard, is already done at Perth; and surely it is as necessary, and may be done as easily, at Glasgow. Though the art of sitting firmly and gracefully on horseback has been much neglected, it is a valuable and manly piece of education: the things you mention are very suitable to us; but if they are now to be taught, provision should be made for teaching this also.

I must also grant to you, that the things taught, and the manner of teaching them, practised at present in universities, are liable to much censure. The case is sufficiently understood, even by those who are unwilling to confess the truth of it. Without all question, education might easily be put upon a much more advantageous footing. I have heard so many good judges, and indeed every one that I converse with, of this opinion, that I suppose there are but very few who will offer to dispute the point with you. By all that I can learn, it is almost the universal opinion in this place, that if we would expect any general benefit from a course

of school education, either the plan that is pursued in the university must be greatly altered, or some other proper method of education must be fallen upon.

REMARK I. But whether your letter is wrote in the properest strain to obtain either the one or the other of these ends, is with me, and several others, a very great question. You have, it is apprehended, indulged yourselves in too much acrimony of expression; which, the more foundation there is for it, the persons concerned will the less excuse. The sense which themselves have of the inutility of what they teach will appear in proportion to the strength of their resentment; but this brings about no change. With too little reserve you have told them their faults; and, as is usual, they will be the more tenacious of them. They will be at the more pains to defend; or palliate what is manifestly wrong; and, perhaps, will affect to set the highest value upon the very things you chiefly blame. They will avail themselves of the keenness of your stile, complain of rude usage; maintain that all you say proceeds from mere spleen; and continue to teach just as they did before.

When, in any writing, the faults of men are openly censured, the persons, aimed at, will cry out against the performance as scurrilous, be it expressed in ever so modest terms. But, to be plain with you, there are some passages in your Letter, which, I am sure, will appear to be satirical. That way of writing has, no doubt, been esteemed useful to laugh or shame men out of their follies; but, to gain so good an end, it had need to be managed by a very delicate hand. To reproach a man too roughly, even for his real faults, is to make a satire against one's self.

You had been stung with indignation to see yourselves laughed at, on account of your ignorance; and you presently begin to think of an apology: but, in my opinion, before you had sat down to write your Letter, you ought first to have been in a meek and calm temper, and to have used none but soft and soothing expressions: and it is well if, with all this art, you could have succeeded. It is no easy matter to prevail with a society to rectify wrong measures, or to depart from what promotes their interest, or contributes to their ease. "To abandon usurped power,"

says a celebrated historian *, speaking of a certain convocation, “ to renounce lucrative error, “ is a sacrifice which the virtue of individuals “ has, on some occasions, offered to truth; but, “ from any society of men, no such effort can “ be expected. The corruptions of a society, “ recommended by common utility, and justifi- “ ed by universal practice, are viewed by its “ members without shame or horror, and re- “ formation never proceeds from themselves, “ but is always forced upon them by some fo- “ reign hand.” It was to be feared, that, at any rate, the behaviour of the learned society might have been suitable to this unfeeling and inflexible spirit. But much more this is to be feared now, after you have irritated them by, I will say, your indelicate, and, in some instances at least, unnecessary satire.

Thus have you tempted the university to make no alterations in their teaching: nor have you taken the most likely way to get the Academy erected. It is much questioned, whether it was prudent in you to take such particular notice of two eminent gentlemen in this city. You judged

* Dr. ROBERTSON'S History of Scotland, Vol. I.

that this would, at least, no way mar the end you propose: but were you right in that judgment, or were you under a mistake? Have we not many other able men? Why celebrate two of your fellow-citizens only, and overlook all the rest? Will not these last, will not every one of them, who is of a narrow turn of mind, be provoked? Though they may be convinced of the utility of the scheme proposed, will they not throw all the obstructions they can in the way, that the proposal may not succeed? Have you not unwarily given them some cause to do so? Is it to be expected that every one will advance a public-spirited measure, when he himself has been unhandsomely treated? And, is it not a great pity, that an useful design should be marred or retarded, by the uncautiousness of those, who were forward enough to undertake, and seemed to be in earnest to promote it?

Besides, it is doubted, whether you were the proper persons to propose a Reform in the matter of education: if the proposal had come from some of our most wealthy and experienced citizens, even though it had been wrote with no more spirit, it would have had a far better chance to

be put in execution. Many a good motion has been rejected, because of the low condition or character of him who made it. Some great and happy changes may have been begun and effected by weak instruments: but our people of note will hardly espouse or forward a scheme, proposed by those who are supposed to be far inferior to our middle rate citizens. It is delicate to speak out on this point; you will understand my meaning.

REMARK 2. In your description of a Teacher of the Classics, you seem to insinuate that there either has been formerly, or exists at present, some Professor, who reads and explains every part of Horace, without missing a line; at least, unless I and many others are mistaken, this must be your meaning. Now, this I look upon as a groundless and malicious calumny. I flatly contradict it: I affirm that it is impossible there ever was or can be any such Teacher. There was none so indiscreet in my time; and if any such extraordinary person had started up since, I think, I must have heard of him. Who can believe, that any person should have so small a share of delicacy, or common sense, as to explain the

Epodes, and several passages of the Satires, of Horace, before a numerous meeting of young men? And if one did actually read such smutty passages, could he be so far master of himself, as to read them without any emotion? You describe a man, just like some king or emperor, I have read of, who, it is said, heard of his wife's being killed, without feeling or discovering either pity, or sorrow, or anger, or joy. I must say you have been in some odd temper of mind, when you wrote what no man will ever believe.

REMARK 3. I am of opinion, that before you had blamed the course of philosophy, taught at the university, you should, first, have made a full enumeration of the several things delivered in that course. This, at least, would have been fair dealing; and hereby your readers would have been better able to judge, whether your censure is well or ill founded.

The course of philosophy is finished in three sessions: one at logic, one at ethics, and one at natural philosophy.

The Professor of logic begins with reading a little Greek; then teaches terms, propositions, syllogisms, and the other forms of arguing; then

something about ideas, and the division of them; and next proceeds to metaphysics.

The Professor of ethics gives a sketch of logic and metaphysics; then a course of pneumatology, and his system of morality, and jurisprudence.

The Professor of natural philosophy explains Sir Isaac Newton's three laws of nature; then the five mechanic powers; gives an idea of hydrostatics; and demonstrates a few propositions in optics and astronomy.

By this full view of the course, it would have appeared, that, neither history, nor geography, nor chronology, are among the things taught; and, perhaps, some part of your reasoning might have been superseded, or, at least, it would have carried in it more evidence and force.

I could have furnished you with a decisive proof, that some of the things you judge to be of so much importance, were not always excluded from the course of philosophy, taught in this university. Looking lately among old books, I got in my hand a manuscript of the lectures delivered more than a hundred years ago; and I found in it a pretty accurate treatise of geography, and another of chronology. Under this

last head, pains had been taken to cause the students understand the epact, the golden number, the cycle of the sun, the indictions, the olympiads, the æra of Nabonassar, and the Julian period. Some of these are very simple things; but now boys, when they leave the college, do not understand them, and, perhaps, have never heard of them: so that long ago, some of these very branches of science were in vogue, which at this day are esteemed important. For what cause they were left out, and whether the things taught instead of them are of less or more value; or whether, when almost every other art is improved, the art of teaching in universities has dwindled and decayed, I had rather leave to be investigated and determined by you, than run the risk of passing a wrong judgment myself.

REMARK 4. I find several people are of opinion, that you inveigh too severely against logic. They think that you decry the art of reasoning, and arraigning one's thoughts in a natural order. They alledge that in so short a discourse you have sometimes used weak arguments, and have betrayed ignorance of method oftener than once;

and that it is no wonder you disparage what you do not understand. I believe, I could point out some errors of that sort: but you have so candidly confessed your ignorance, and so feelingly deplored the causes of it, that I choose not to make any remarks on that head, which otherwise I should not have failed to do. I suppose, however, though you seem, indeed, to have expressed your meaning too strongly, that you did not intend to vilify the art of reasoning, but only the dry and technical logic of the schools: and I think you have not been well informed concerning a fact, which might have been brought out on this part of your subject. I have observed how logic has been taught here for these thirty years; and there is one thing I wonder much at: most of the session is still consumed in teaching syllogisms; but the old practice of defending and impugning these has altogether gone into desuetude. This seems very strange. Why take up so long time about syllogisms, and not teach the students the practice of disputing? If this last is confessed to be useless, the first must be so too. If there was reason that the one should fall to the ground, there was the same

reason that the other should have fallen along with it. This is such an inconsistency, that had you known it, or attended to it, I believe you would have been ready enough to mention it, and, perhaps, to expatiate upon it.

I call it an inconsistency in teaching; because it is, perhaps, no loss to the scholars that disputing is come to an end: it might bring them in conceit with quibbling, and teach them to be litigious, which would be neither to their honour, nor their profit. A learned Jesuit*, some of whose writings fell in my way a long while ago, makes himself merry with a certain nation, that lies somewhere on the west side of England, who, he says, are all born logicians. They are continually employed about the universals, the *ens rationis*, and the metaphysical degrees: they feed on chimeras, and enter furiously into the disputes of the schools.

Gens ratione furens, et mentem pasta chimaeris.

However, in his judgment, they are at least no better qualified for the arts, either of peace or war, than their neighbours, who have no such quibbling or polemical disposition.

My opinion about the ordinary logic and me-

* Pere Tarteron.

taphysics is, perhaps, not very much different from this gentleman's, and from yours; but I like not to say so keen things against them, as you have done. I choose rather to express my sentiments in the words of a noble author of exquisite taste, whose judgment is esteemed correct, and was once highly revered in this university. "Had," says he*, "the craftiest of men, for many ages together, been employed in finding out a method to confound reason, and degrade the understanding of mankind, they could not, perhaps, have succeeded better than by the establishing of such a mock science."

REMARK 5. It appears to me that there is much truth in what you have said about morality. The easiest and most useful things ought, certainly, to be first taught: and if the nature, limits, and extent of the particular virtues were once tolerably understood, the different schemes of moral philosophy might be well enough explained to the students in a week or two; which is full as much time as they deserve, or as in prudence ought to be bestowed on them. I have heard of teachers who reasoned so long about the

* Shaftsbury, Characteristics, Vol. I.

origin of moral virtue, that they seemed to have brought themselves and their scholars to a belief, that there was no obligation at all upon them to practise morality.

To dispute about these different systems has been long fashionable, and yet nothing seems to be more misjudged. Is it the aim of morality to improve the heart, and direct the practice? or, is it to exercise the understanding, and strengthen the faculty of reasoning? This last end might be better promoted by mathematics than by metaphysics: and if there are some of those schemes which are curious, their value decreases, and they ought to be the less dwelt upon, in proportion as they are difficult to be understood.

A pedantic rhetorician in antient times afforded much diversion. He invented, or professed, the art of obscurity. "Darken your sentiments," would he say to his scholars, "express yourselves by enigmas, that people may not understand you." And when he had put together, or made up, a string of jingling sounds, without meaning, "That, he said, that period is excellent! I understand it not myself!"

A diversion somewhat similar to this has

been given by many teachers, since the revival of learning in Europe. One either invented or patched up a system, and gravely employed himself in teaching and repeating it over every year, as if there had not been many other things that were more generally useful, and many books that had as much merit as what he had invented or set together. Discerning people saw, that, at any rate, he was paying a very great compliment to himself: and yet, for several ages, there has been a succession of teachers, who all followed much the same track, each of them in his own particular way. There seems to have been some fascination in this matter: for, if after some years experience, any one of them found, that there was not above one in ten who understood what he esteemed so much, he must have been desperately, and over head and ears, bewitched with his notions, if he still continued to insist, principally, upon them. Could any thing have brought him to think justly of his favourite system, it would have been his own observation, that it was, and must have been, unintelligible; since, in many repeated trials, he himself was incapable to throw light upon it, or to make his scholars comprehend it.

I have sometimes thought, that the things taught in our universities ought to be ascertained, and fixed by law, and altered according to the necessity of the times. A number of wise and good men might pitch upon those parts of science, which are most likely to render the youth useful, and to warm their hearts with the love of virtue; and each professor might have his particular part assigned him, which he was invariably to keep by. Something like this seems to have been done at the founding of universities: it is done in England with respect to the grammar there taught, and seems, at least, full as necessary with respect to philosophy: for, as I said before, it is, and was ever thought, odd enough, to see a professor labouring at a minute, partial, or Utopian system *, as if it had been the only thing worthy to be known; and that whenever he was succeeded by another, his idol of a system was no longer heard of. While he lived, it was a local morality, and circumscribed within very narrow bounds: and it was a temporary one too; for, when he died, it died with him, and had not strength to survive him.

C 2

* See Lord KAIMS' Elements of Criticism.

Besides, the frequent changing from system to system is really dangerous. One is certain, that morality arises from one thing; another keenly affirms that it springs from a different source; a third pretends to prove that it comes from neither of the former: and half thinking people are tempted to suspect that there is no firm foundation of morality at all.

REMARK 6. But in all your letter, nothing, at first reading, appeared to me so great a paradox, as that which you allege concerning students of divinity, namely, that there is no discernable difference, whether they have been the scholars of a weak or a learned professor. I was shocked at this. I paused, and considered it again and again. I had the patience to examine into facts, and began to see, what I wondered I did not see at first, that you did not advance this without very good foundation. But you will forgive me to say, that that part of your letter is superficial. The thought is only started: it deserved to have been kept in view, and pursued a little.

I was myself a sort of student for a very long time before I applied to business; and, for at least thirty years past, I have observed the accom-

plishments of most of the students who have been licensed in and about this city: and, to speak with the utmost impartiality, after having considered the matter with serious attention, I cannot say that the preachers, in general, were remarkably either better or worse, whoever was the professor. Nay, when I compare the times with the most accurate care, I am forced to think, that between twenty and thirty years ago, there was a greater number of sensible and good pulpit-men licensed, than have ever appeared within so short a compass of years, since that time. I imagined, however, that it was possible I might be mistaken in this opinion, 'till I purposely conversed with several grave and intelligent men, who confirmed me strongly in it.

I have kept up an acquaintance with the clergy in several presbyteries round this city; and I have heard them often, and almost unanimously, complaining, that, for the most part, those who have been settled among them, within these twelve or sixteen years, do not, in ability, equal those who went before them. Perhaps some small allowance might be made for that propensity which most men have to commend the dead

more than the living : but there is also a strong and general bias in favour of young beginners. However, all that I conclude from so unanimous a complaint is, that the preachers who have been lately licensed, or have lately entered into the ministry, are not, generally speaking, possessed of greater ability than those who were licensed many years ago.

And yet it is not likely that all the professors for thirty years past were alike able to teach. The very reverend and worthy gentleman, who has taught divinity here, for near twenty years, has, without dispute, very considerable talents, and much acquired knowledge ; and he applied assiduously to the business. I remember, that when he was called to that chair, there was an almost universal expectation, that the preachers educated by him would both have a larger way of thinking, and would acquit themselves in the pulpit to far better purpose, than ever had been the case with the students under any professor before him.

But in divinity, the same time is employed, and the same, or nearly the same, things are read by every teacher. The doctrines, the precepts, and motives are the same: in short, the same system is

taught by whosoever is the professor. The effect, therefore, must be the same, though the respective abilities of the professors may be very different. If a dwarf raises up a stone four foot high, and a giant raises a stone of the same weight and size also four foot, when they are both let fall on a pavement, the impression made by the dwarf's stone will be equal to that made by the giant's. If Therſites throws a dart with all his force, which is as 20; and Ajax, whose force is as 100, throws a dart of equal weight and sharpness, with a force only as 20; each of them will alike pierce the shield of Hector. It is very much the same with respect to any two teachers. However far one of them may excel the other in ability, the same or nearly the same force is exerted and applied by each of them: nay, in some respects, the weak professor may seem rather to have the advantage. Sensible of his inability, he will, it is probable, be more in earnest; his way of thinking and speaking is more familiar; his capacity is more commensurate to that of his scholars. In common life, a weak man enlightens and leads a weak man more effectually than a man of ability can do. If he teaches in Latin, or even in English, and blunders in grammar

now and then, the students will be diverted ; they will be rouzed to attention, and will long remember the doctrines or things which the professor had not ready language to express. By this means they will imbibe knowlege, perhaps, faster than by a grave, uniform, and sensible discourse, which oftentimes tires the hearers ; and, having no breaks in it, does not renew nor keep up their attention.

But we judge of preachers, not by the depth of their knowlege, but by the easiness of their compositions, and by their expressing themselves in a natural manner. Now, the students, for many years, have been taught the art of composition : they have got a course of lectures judiciously collected from the best masters in rhetoric, antient and modern, and very diligently delivered. It might be thought reasonable to conclude, that, in this respect, the students must be considerably and greatly improved : and yet I have not, nor do I know any body who has, observed that these lectures have produced any sensible effect. The present preachers, generally speaking, compose just as the preachers formerly did, who, perhaps, during the time of their studying, never heard of composition.

The real cause of this, I take to be, that the students are not called to compose any oftener than formerly. To give a discourse once a year, perhaps seldomer, is all that is required of them. If they were obliged to compose every week, or every month, they would soon out-strip those who studied long ago. To compose frequently by the help of so good directions would produce a very speedy and remarkable effect. But without the exercise of composition, the directions are in a manner lost. It would be just so in any other art. Should a writing-master entertain his scholars with the most excellent rules about writing, but never put a pen in their hand, he would lose his labour: or should a carpenter harangue his apprentices how to hew the wood, how to form every plank, and how to join the whole; but never cause them manage the hatchet, or drive a nail, he would never teach them the art of ship-building. It is the same thing with respect to composition: the rules are profitable, if they are frequently put in practice; and without this all the rules in the world will never enable a man to compose. The exercise of composing is far more effectual than the rules. This is ma-

D

nifest from what has happened in this university; the composing one discourse a year did, formerly, bring the students to know a little about composition; the composing one discourse a year produces the same effect still; and little alteration is made, though lectures on composition are now delivered.

But if instead of one discourse, there were ten or twelve discourses composed yearly by each student, the advantage of the lectures would soon appear. Though these discourses were not all delivered from the desk, but only looked over, and the errors in composition pointed out by the master, a wonderful proficiency would be made; and your position, that the scholars of an able and of a weak professor are just equal, would no longer be well founded.

In the mean time, I allow the position. I suppose I have touched at the causes of it, which you did not. The remedy, I think, is obvious, if teachers will please to be at a little more pains; without which, things will go on as before; and the rising generation will have no cause to value themselves in point of composition above their predecessors, notwithstanding the best lectures they may hear.

But I would fain hope, that, along with so good lectures, more frequent composition will also soon be brought in fashion. When the precepts are so well delivered, what pity is it that the practice should be so much neglected ! The utility of conjoining them will some time appear. Indeed it is manifest, that the justest precepts, unless they are applied to practice, are very useless things, and very soon forgot. But if one labours to make himself master of the art, concerning which he has heard the precepts, he both learns the art, and remembers the precepts : by attempting to apply them, he fixes them in his memory ; by remembering and using them, he becomes more and more perfect in the art. In short, to excel in composition, constant and almost daily practice is necessary : the rules did not teach composition ; composition produced the rules.

REMARK 7. You seem to suppose, that the desire of knowlege is, by far, more strong and general in this city than I take it really to be. That there are some men of taste, cannot be denied : but the general desire here, at present, is to have a little more money ; and considering the

populoufness of the place, there are, alas ! extremely few who trouble themselves about any part of science whatever. They may talk plausibly about your scheme, and even, in their judgments, approve it ; but it will be great odds if ever they open their purses to set it a-going. Could you have proposed any scheme which they saw was to double their gain next month, or next year, they would very greedily have snapped at the bait : nay, sometimes they will be busy about the most frivolous things, while the most momentous are neglected. At the election of a parliament-man, which concerns us exceedingly little, you see here a mighty, and almost universal, stir ; but when a proper plan of education is proposed, which is of the utmost importance to the interest and honour of this city, there will be some, from whom, perhaps, you expected much, who will be thoroughly drousy and inactive. I think, therefore, that your hopes of success are rather too sanguine ; for, though I am not at present in the council, I imagine I know their temper : and I have but little hope that the magistrates and they will, like the town-council of Perth, expend any money in that

way. Between you and me, they will rather throw it away on parliamenteering; or on romantic projects, such as locks on the river, which can never be executed; and if they could, instead of being beneficial, would be highly detrimental.

Not that I despair of an academy altogether. Considering the enterprizing spirit of this city, it may, perhaps, be erected in a little time. Several of my next neighbours, some of them of considerable rank and influence, see the necessity of it, and talk about it in a generous and public-spirited manner. The greatest difficulty, they think, is to find proper teachers: and, no doubt, if the thing is done at all, it should be done to purpose, and not in a sham manner. It would be ridiculous to employ those to teach history, geography, and philosophy, who are reputed to have no tolerable knowledge of these things: it would be still more ridiculous to call a school, taught by such people, an Academy: but I am persuaded it is not so difficult to find two or three young men of sprightly genius, possessed of the rudiments of knowledge, and who are either already, or can soon make themselves, accomplished

for the undertaking. There are such students, tho' they be but little known : and certainly no other but the magistrates, and principal inhabitants, ought to take, or pretend to take, the lead in this matter. They are best able to judge of the merit of those who may offer their service. Tho' no salary was to be given, the magistrates ought to take care what is the capacity of those who are intrusted with the education of youth ; especially in the important things proposed to be taught at the Academy. No man should be allowed to teach such things, till he first undergoes a public examination in presence of the magistrates, and be approved of by competent judges.

If there shall be, in this place, a brisk and general desire for such a course of education, and if proper encouragement be offered, fit teachers of every particular branch will soon appear ; and if to pronounce justly, to judge of fine writing, and to compose in English, shall, as you propose, be among the things taught at the Academy ; I do affirm, that any teacher of tolerable genius, may borrow great assistance from a valuable book just published, the last work of a very masterly writer * ; I mean, *The Elements of Cri-*

* Lord KAIMS.

ticism, the first essay of the kind I have seen in English; and, perhaps, it may be a long time before any other shall venture to write upon the same subject.

REMARK 8. You seem to have had two designs in view: one to defend yourselves and us from the imputation of ignorance; and the other to have an Academy erected. The first, as I remarked before, you sometimes pursue with rather too much wit and satire. I doubt not but the provocation you have got may be very great. I have seen and felt very severe mocking of that sort myself: but I must repeat it again, that no provocation should have caused you write any thing which might mar your principal design, or make things worse. Universities, ill regulated as they are, are the best things we yet have for attaining some little knowledge. The masters, indeed, impart too little; and few of them give directions how to read: but when young people are sent to a college, and have no other business, some of them will give application to study. And though many of the things they hear in school may be thorny and unprofitable, yet, by conversing with one another, they

fall into something that is of use to them. Some shreds of knowlege from the literary and busy world reach even to them, which are, perhaps, of more use than the lectures they hear: and, notwithstanding all you say, even these lectures are of some advantage. I think, therefore, you ought not to have lessened that esteem and reverence which scholars should have for their teachers, nor to have talked so slightly of that solemnity which, you acknowledge, is useful and necessary to convey instruction. It was also wrong, I fear, to use so many sharp expressions: these may provoke the professors to become more slothful, and to turn to things still more dark and unprofitable than those they now teach: and this may very likely be the case, if they see that no Academy is like to be erected here: and yet, if the professors be not too obstinate, a very different effect may be produced. Oftentimes faults are assoon corrected as they are taken notice of. Since your letter began to be talked of, I have heard that the professors are giving out that there was long ago a design to teach geography instead of logic: so that they themselves have been before-hand with you, though you,

perhaps, may be vain enough to assume the merit of that design, as till now we heard nothing of it.

But after all, when I say that your satire may obstruct your design, I am not quite sure that I am in the right. Perhaps, it was necessary; perhaps, you have been sparing enough in it. That a true religion may be embraced, the false one is to be exploded: that a new and proper plan of education may be encouraged, the faults of the old and unsuitable one must be laid open. But it required an uncommon degree of boldness to speak out as you have done. I have often seen, that when all the world were convinced that wrong measures were publicly pursued; and when every wise man was wishing that others might openly censure such measures, yet he was shy and silent himself. How far you have merited blame, rather than praise, I am loth to say: one thing seems plain, that if you had been very satirically disposed, you might have thrown into your paper several late transactions, which would have appeared more severe than any thing you have said; and, as you are of this city, the things I mean could not but be known to you.

These are my poor remarks. I have offered them with a freedom which, I hope, is not offensive. The sense and spirit of your paper will be generally approved. The strokes of satire will be less relished. The design is noble, seasonable, and necessary. The success of it, I fear, is at best doubtful. However, by the very proposal, some good, I hope, may be produced. If the gentlemen of the university are in good humour, they will voluntarily make great alterations in the matter and manner of their teaching. If they believe that an Academy is to be erected, they will be forced to alter many things: if there is great probability that your plan shall soon take place, that will overcome their greatest obstinacy: if a royal visitation can be obtained, that will set all on a right footing. Sensible men will form an useful plan of teaching, and the professors will be tied down to observe it. If the crown appoint factors to uplift and manage the college revenues, all occasion of wrangling will be removed; the masters will live in harmony, and will have leisure to mind their proper business. They will be freed from much obloquy; and those parts of the country from

which they have hitherto raised their revenues, will be rescued from much real or imagined oppression. What I wish for most of all in this matter, for the sake of the public, and my own children, is to see an Academy presently erected: my next wish is, that the university would wisely, of their own accord, make the necessary and desired alterations in their teaching. If neither of these is done, I wish to see a royal visitation as soon as possible. It is about forty years since there was one; and it could not be more needed at that time than it is now. If it is asked in a decent and respectful manner, without showing any ill humour, or throwing out any personal reflections, a thing so beneficial to the country, and that puts the government to no expence, would certainly be granted.

Shall the university, content with the old manner of teaching, apply to parliament to have bursaries altered from the original destination of the founder, so as to suit their present interest or particular views; and meet with success? shall this city petition to be indemnified for its losses, and to have its revenues increased and extended, and succeed also? And are there none who will

apply to the king and privy-council, for that which would advance the interest, the virtue, and happiness of their children and posterity? If such application is made, is it possible but that it must be listened to? It is worthy of this city, and of the whole gentlemen in the neighbouring counties, to unite as one man, and respectfully, but firmly, to insist for so necessary and cheap a favour. It is not a narrow, factious, or self-interested affair, but of public, of extensive, and of lasting importance to the welfare and aggrandisement of our country. Is there so low an esteem, so languid a desire of knowledge, so feeble a concern for posterity in city and country, that men will not trouble themselves to ask a thing of the highest importance, when success is almost infallible? a thing, the consequences of which are great and good, and which brings harm to no society, or particular person. Were there an Academy erected, men might continue in their sleep and indolence, and suffer things to proceed in the old insipid way. But, with what reluctance do I think that both may possibly be neglected! If young people had been properly educated for sixty years past, it is not mine, but the

general opinion, that our country, at this time, would have been highly improved. How painful to think that the same slothfulness may continue still! Twenty years ago, when I was riding a-cross the country, several farmers complained to me, that if their grand-fathers had planted trees on the barren ground, forty years before, it would, by their time, have yielded great profit; and last year I was sorry to observe, that they had left room for their grand-children to lodge the same complaint against themselves. Will we be equally and infinitely more foolish? Convinced that education has been long, and is at present, on a wrong footing, will we make no attempts to set it on a right one? For my part, I cannot but wish that there may be spirit and resolution among us, to offer serious and repeated, but modest and inoffensive, addresses on this head; and that either you, or others, may awake and keep up the public attention to this great and momentous concern, till something shall be effectually done. I hope the letter I have remarked upon, which, in several respects, I think very faulty, will not, however, be the single essay of the kind by your society; making only a transient

noise, for a few days, and suffered to sink again into oblivion. I hope there are a set of men in the country, whose business it is to examine schools, and supervise the education of youth, who will imitate the spirit of their fore-fathers; and who, if this matter shall, by all others, be neglected, will have the virtue to make a proper application, and the honour of obtaining their request. Though they were lately unsuccessful in an application for themselves, where more money was sought, they will, in this generous and necessary measure, meet with full success, when no money is asked for, or desired.

I have, no doubt, heard conjectures about the particular writer, or writers, of your letter; but as you have chosen to conceal your names, I follow your example: and, in order to convey to you my remarks, such as they are, I have privately sent them to one, who, I believe, knows by what channel to communicate them to you. You will please forgive this trouble, and believe me to be,

GENTLEMEN,

Yours, etc. B—

GLASGOW, March 10.



again
en in
mine
outh,
hers;
e ne-
roper
ir re-
efsful
more
erous
ccesfs,

t the
; but
es, I
nvey
have
nows
you.
elieve

and
be
the